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OUTCOME OF THE CONFERENCE, INCLUDING A PLAN
OF ACTION FOR NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION

Draft Yokohama Message submitted by the Chairman
of the Open-Ended Drafting Group of the Main
Committee, Mr. Daniel D. C. Don Nanjira (Kenya)

We, the States Members of the United Nations and other States, having met at the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, in the city of Yokohama, Japan, from 23 May to 27 May 1994, in partnership with non-governmental organizations, and with the participation of international organizations, the scientific community, business, industry and the media, deliberating within the framework of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, expressing our deep concern for the continuing human suffering and disruption of development caused by natural disasters, and inspired by the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World,

Affirm that:

1. The impact of natural disasters in terms of human and economic losses has risen in recent years, and society in general has become more vulnerable to natural disasters. Those usually most affected by natural and other disasters are the poor and socially disadvantaged groups in developing countries as they are least equipped to cope with them.

2. Disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness and relief are four elements which contribute to and gain from the

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implementation of sustainable development policies. These elements, along with environmental protection and sustainable development, are closely interrelated. Therefore, nations should incorporate them in their development plans and ensure efficient follow-up measures at the community, national, subregional, regional and international levels.

3. Disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness are better than disaster response in achieving the goals and objectives of the Decade. Disaster response alone is not sufficient, as it yields only temporary results at a very high cost. We have followed this limited approach for too long. This has been further demonstrated by the recent focus on response to complex emergencies which, although compelling, should not divert from pursuing a comprehensive approach. Prevention contributes to lasting improvement in safety and is essential to integrated disaster management.

4. The world is increasingly interdependent. All countries shall act in a new spirit of partnership to build a safer world based on common interests and shared responsibility to save human lives, since natural disasters do not respect borders. Regional and international cooperation will significantly enhance our ability to achieve real progress in mitigating disasters through the transfer of technology and the sharing of information and joint disaster prevention and mitigation activities. Bilateral and multilateral assistance and financial resources should be mobilized to support these efforts.

5. The information, knowledge and some of the technology necessary to reduce the effects of natural disasters can be available in many cases at low cost and should be applied. Appropriate technology and data, with the corresponding training, should be made available to all freely and in a timely manner, particularly to developing countries.

6. Community involvement and their active participation should be encouraged in order to gain greater insight into the individual and collective perception of development and risk, and to have a clear understanding of the cultural and organizational characteristics of each society as well as of its behaviour and interactions with the physical and natural environment. This knowledge is of the utmost importance to determine those things which favour and hinder prevention and mitigation or encourage or limit the preservation of the environment for the development of future generations, and in order to find effective and efficient means to reduce the impact of disasters.

7. The adopted Yokohama Strategy and related Plan of Action for the rest of the Decade and beyond:

(a) Will note that each country has the sovereign responsibility to protect its citizens from natural disasters;

(b) Will give priority attention to the developing countries, in particular the least developed, land-locked countries and the small island developing States;

(c) Will develop and strengthen national capacities and capabilities and, where appropriate, national legislation for natural and other disaster

prevention, mitigation and preparedness, including the mobilization of non-governmental organizations and participation of local communities;

(d) Will promote and strengthen subregional, regional and international cooperation in activities to prevent, reduce and mitigate natural and other disasters, with particular emphasis on:

- (i) Human and institutional capacity-building and strengthening;
- (ii) Technology sharing, the collection, the dissemination and the utilization of information;
- (iii) Mobilization of resources.

8. The framework of action of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction provides all vulnerable countries, in particular the developing countries, with the opportunity to achieve a safer world by the end of this century and beyond. In this regard, the international community and the United Nations system in particular must provide adequate support to the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, and its mechanisms, especially the secretariat of the Decade to enable them to carry out their mandate.

9. The Yokohama Conference is at a crossroad in human progress. In one direction lie the meagre results of an extraordinary opportunity given to the United Nations and its Member States. In the other direction, the United Nations and the world community can change the course of events by reducing the suffering from natural disasters. Action is urgently needed.

10. Nations should view the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World as a call to action, individually and in concert with other nations, to implement policies and goals reaffirmed in Yokohama, and to use the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction as a catalyst for change.
